

# The Prominent Role of Hat Chap Cai Luong Arts in Tourist Attraction to Thoi Son Island, Tien Giang Province

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this article is to study and analyze the current development and utilization of cultural and artistic tourism products on Thoi Son Island, Tien Giang Province. The article focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of incorporating don ca tai tu music (a genre of chamber music in the traditional music of southern Vietnam) in serving tourism activities in recent times and identifying existing issues in the development process of these cultural and artistic tourism products. In addition to discussing the advantages and competitive capabilities of Thoi Son Island, the article also proposes suitable solutions for the development of cultural and artistic tourism products in the locality, particularly the application and promotion of the art of hat chap cai luong (one of the traditional theater opera plays in southern Vietnam) combined with storytelling for tourism purposes. The research methodology employed in the article combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative part of the research will concentrate on collecting data on tourist numbers, income from cultural and artistic tourism activities, and tourist satisfaction. The qualitative part will involve conducting interviews, surveys, and gathering opinions from experts and local residents to gain a better understanding of the issues related to cultural and artistic tourism products featuring cai luong singing on Thoi Son Island. The research findings indicate that incorporating the art of hat chap cai luong into tourism activities is effective. However, several issues have been identified that need to be addressed, such as diversifying cultural and artistic tourism products, protecting and promoting the local cultural values, and ensuring the ability to meet the future demand for cultural tourism products without causing harm.*

**Keywords—** *Thoi Son Island, the arts of hat chap cai luong, serving tourism activities, new products, Tien Giang province, the traditional theater opera play in southern Vietnam, Authentic and Beautiful Cai Luong*

To rejuvenate the tourism destination of Thoi Son Island (Tien Giang province) and meet the demands of tourists, it is necessary to encourage the development a tourism product that is more attractive in terms of colors and content. With this in mind, the author boldly implements a project titled "**Exploiting the Cultural Value of Hat Chap Cai Luong in Tourism Activities in Con Thoi Son, Tien Giang Province**". This project is essential in aiming for a creative tourism experience, contributing to enhancing the appeal of the destination for tourists, and generating socio-economic development opportunities for the local area and the country. It ensures sustainable income for the local people as well as the preservation of cultural heritage.

The article utilizes a research methodology that combines

quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research results show that the proposed solutions for developing cultural tourism products incorporating the hat chap cai luong arts aim not only to contribute to the development of cultural tourism in the Southwest provinces in general and Tien Giang province in particular but also to ensure that they do not compromise the ability to meet the future demand for exploiting the unique cultural tourism products.

## I. OVERVIEW OF THOI SON AND HAT CHAP CAI LUONG ARTS

### 1. Introduction to Thoi Son island and the current state of tourism development

### 1.1. Geographic location and attractive features of Thoi Son island

The data from the information page of the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Tien Giang Province shows that Thoi Son island “Cồn Thới Sơn”, also known as Thoi Son Island destination, is the largest island among the four islands on the Tien River, with a total area of about 1.200 hectares, with more than 6,000 residents, of which over 90% are engaged in agriculture. Thoi Son island is one of the most important and prominent tourist destinations in My Tho City.

My Tho City is located at the gateway to the Mekong Delta region, in Tien Giang Province. Situated in a prime location surrounded by rivers and fertile land with lush green gardens, My Tho has convenient transportation routes and is only about 73 km away from Ho Chi Minh City. In addition, My Tho preserves many historical and cultural relics, revolutionary sites, architectural arts, traditional crafts, and floating markets.

Since 1988, the local population has been enthusiastically engaged in tourism. With the beauty of the Mekong Delta, the lush green orchards laden with ripe fruits in every season, and the honest and open-minded nature of the local residents, Thoi Son Island has created its own unique attraction for many tourists. To further elaborate on the attractive factors for tourism in Thoi Son island, we can identify the following points:

**Unique geographical location:** Thoi Son island is situated in Tien Giang, in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam, with a landscape of abundant rivers and fertile plains. This destination features green fields, fruit orchards, and an intricate network of canals and waterways.

**Beautiful natural surroundings:** Thoi Son island is surrounded by the Tien River and numerous small branches, creating a picturesque setting with lush greenery from orchards.

**Folk culture:** Visitors can explore the unique folk culture of Southern Vietnam and learn about the local people's way of life through experiential activities such as agricultural experiences, visiting fruit orchards and dining in gardens, participating in activities like fishing, riding three-leaf boats on canals, visiting bee farms, and enjoying traditional handmade cakes and candies at local workshops.

**Hat Chap Cai Luong Arts:** According to the document “**Tuồng hát Cải lương: Exploration and Discussion, 10 Years of Essential Tuồng Titles (1922–1931)**” by author Nguyen Phuc An, General Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 2022, from pages 46–53, there is a concise and widely agreed upon definition: “*Hát chặp, meaning paired singing, is a form of the performance consisting of*

*multiple consecutive songs accompanied by various movements. Embedded within is a short, meaningful, and content-rich storyline*”.

One of the prominent cultural attractions in Thoi Son island is the art of **Hat Chap Cai Luong Arts**. Cai Luong is a form of traditional Vietnamese opera that combines music, singing, and storytelling. The performances are characterized by the melodic arts between male and female singers, accompanied by traditional musical instruments. The **Hat Chap Cai Luong Arts** adds a unique flavor to the cultural experiences offered in Thoi Son island, captivating tourists with its melodious tunes and expressive storytelling.

Overall, **Hat Chap Cai Luong Arts** plays a prominent role in creating the appeal of tourism in Thoi Son island, Tien Giang Province. The combination of cultural heritage, natural beauty, and engaging experiences, including the captivating performances of **Hat Chap Cai Luong Arts**, attracts visitors and contributes to the development of tourism in the region.

### 1.2. The current situation the current state of integrating the value of musical performance into tourism on Thoi Son Island (Tien Giang Province)

As one of the cradles of various traditional art forms, when it comes to “hat boi” (a form of Vietnamese theatre as classical “Vietnamese opera” influenced by Chinese opera) in My Tho, many elderly people fondly remember the renowned artist Ba Kien in Ward 5, My Tho town, who played the role of **Guan Yu** (a Chinese military general serving under the warlord Liu Bei during the late Eastern Han dynasty of China), known as **Guan Yu in the southern region of Vietnam**, to distinguish him from **Guan Yu in Sai Gon** portrayed by artist Minh To (father of the famous artist Thanh Loc).

Not only being a well-known land of “hat boi” arts, My Tho is also one of the birthplaces of “don ca tai tu” music (a genre of chamber music in the traditional music of southern Vietnam), with a recorded history of the Nguyen Tong Trieu “don ca tai tu” band performing in France in 1906. This place is also home to the Thay Nam Tu cai luong theater, considered the first cai luong theater established by Mr. Chau Van Tu (the master of cai luong). He was also the person who invented the first phonograph in Vietnam, contributing to the promotion of “don ca tai tu” and cai luong arts in the early 20th century. Tien Giang is also the homeland of playwrights and revered cai luong artists such as Tran Huu Trang, Phung Ha, Bay Nam, Kim Cuong, and Professor Tran Van Khe.

When visiting My Tho, the most popular ecotourism attractions and experiences must include Thoi Son Island, with various enticing activities such as boat tours, rowing

boats, visiting traditional craft villages producing cakes, handicrafts, beekeeping farms, fruit tasting, and enjoying "don ca tai tu" performances.

My Tho-Tien Giang tourism can also be expanded to neighboring destinations such as Go Cong, Dong Hoa Hiep ancient village, Cai Be, Vinh Long, and Ben Tre, creating interesting multi-day tours.

With the aim of exploiting the tourism potential of Thoi Son Island, Tien Giang Province, and enhancing the attractiveness of this destination, the author conducted field surveys and research on the artistic resources of paired *hat chap cai luong arts* on Thoi Son Island. The project was carried out from September 12, 2016, to September 12, 2023 (5 years, excluding the years interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and excluding the time of post-pandemic recovery).

Through the survey and gathering opinions from experts, the author would like to quote a representative opinion from Mr. Nguyen Dong Hoa, Vice General Director of Saigontourist Group, whom the author had the opportunity to interview and film on September 12, 2023, as follows:

"Nowadays, Vietnam's tourism greatly needs new products, especially cultural tourism products, due to their uniqueness and distinctive features, while also being closely linked to the mission of preserving Vietnam's cultural heritage. Vietnam has many cultural heritages, both tangible and intangible, including "don ca tai tu" music and cai luong art, which were recognized by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritages representing humanity in 2013.

In the past, the exploitation of "don ca tai tu" music in the provinces of the Mekong Delta has been implemented, but recently, there have been many limitations. This product requires a language that is easier to understand in order to clarify its beauty and visually appeal to tourists, with concise content.

Cai luong is the spiritual child of the Southern region, derived from "don ca tai tu," but traditional cai luong plays are quite long. In order to introduce cai luong to tourists, innovation is needed—a revolution that changes the appearance of the attractive tourism product—and the new style of cai luong arts with the short time for performance as *hat chap cai luong arts* can play a role in that. The *hat chap cai luong* have a stage, costumes, dance movements, and captivating scripts that can be adapted into various languages."

Tien Giang province is known as one of the cradles of the don ca tai tu and cai luong arts, and it is also considered one of the birthplaces and development centers of the *hat chap cai luong arts*. However, in order to create a

distinctive tourism product centered around the *hat chap cai luong arts*, it is essential to analyze the feasibility of combining tourism with Thoi Son Island and the hap chap cai luong arts.

## II. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF

### 1.2. Introduction to hat chap cai luong arts

#### 1.2.1. Historical background

According to Mr. Huynh Khai, former Head of the Traditional Music Department at the Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music, in an interview conducted on December 27, 2023, "The *hat chap cai luong arts* can be defined as a story written by an author to be performed by manifold individuals, each assuming a distinct role within the same framework or scene. To connect multiple pairs together, the playwright must study the forms of cai luong theater, also known as traditional theater, and use that knowledge to link the pairs and create multiple scenes, some of which can form an act division. In a cai luong play, there can be 2 or 3 different act divisions."

According to the documentation in the book "Nam Muoi Nam Me Hat Cai Luong" (*Fifty Years Passionate about Cai Luong Arts*) by researcher Vuong Hong Sen, the first cai luong play performed at the Western Theater (present-day City Theater) was "Gia Long Tau Quoc: Phap-Viet Nhat Gia" (*King Gia Long's Exile: France and Vietnam under the Same Roof*) on the evening of November 16, 1918, aiming to raise funds. Since cai luong theater rose to its golden age for over half a century, from the 1920s to the 1980s of the 20th century, it has faced new challenges due to the influx of films and various other entertainment art forms from abroad.

Alongside the existence of cai luong theater, which has experienced ups and downs, the *hat chap cai luong arts* has only survived through recorded audio tapes, featuring compositions lasting around 15-20 minutes by renowned composers such as Vien Chau (La Trau Xanh, Quan Am Thi Kinh, Duoi Coi Bo De, Trieu Tu Doat Au Chua, Nguyen Thai Hoc...), Loan Thao (Quan Gam Dau Lang, Luu Minh Chau...), Que Chi (Truong Chi-My Nuong, Trau Cau...).

Although the *hat chap cai luong arts* have a limited scope and are rarely performed on stage, they have contributed to the reputation of many famous artists such as Thanh Nga, Thanh Sang, Minh Phung, Le Thuy, My Chau, Minh Canh, Minh Vuong, Hung Cuong, Bach Tuyet, etc.

Today, the *hat chap cai luong arts* are only occasionally performed at cultural events in Tien Giang province. However, it has mostly given way to excerpts from cai luong plays, which are selected scenes from longer plays lasting 2-3 hours, serving the preferences of connoisseurs

or aiming to reminisce about the golden era of the province's cai luong theater art.

### 1.2.2. *Some characteristics of the hat chap cai luong arts*

**Costumes:** In *hat chap cai luong arts*, the costumes of the performers are traditionally designed in a traditional style, suitable for the characters and the content of the piece, but above all, they reflect the beauty and distinctive features of the Southern culture. Cai luong differs from hát bội (classical opera) in its realism and lack of exaggeration, so theater enthusiasts are often captivated by its authenticity and beauty. The meticulously detailed costumes, vibrant colors, and elegant styles depicting each character and work contribute to creating a unique aesthetic space that attracts the attention of the audience.

Costume designs in cai luong often have a clear objective to reflect the historical context, culture, and personalities of the characters in the performance. They play an important role in shaping the image and perception of the audience towards the characters, scenery, and situations of the cai luong piece. These costumes can include various types of clothing, such as trousers, áo dài (traditional Vietnamese dress), dresses, coats, hats, footwear, accessories, and jewelry. These costumes are often selected based on historical periods, locations, local customs, and the personalities of the characters, ranging from classical costumes to modern attire.

**Stage props:** The stage for *hat chap cai luong arts* is equipped with props that are appropriate for each scene in the performance. Props such as backdrops, altars, bridges, wells, or rivers are intricately designed and arranged neatly, skillfully creating a vivid and realistic space for the unfolding story.

The arrangement and use of stage props in *hat chap cai luong arts* not only demonstrate professionalism but also evoke the cultural values and traditions of the Southern region. The process of creating backdrops is usually divided into two stages: first, painting the backdrops, and then arranging the stage. If it's a room scene, there should be entrances and exits, openable and closed windows, beds, tables, and cabinets. If it's a mountain or forest scene, there should be trees and rocks. If it's a moonlit night, there should be sparkling moonlight in the sky, shimmering stars, and floating clouds.

**Musical instruments:** The cai luong orchestra usually consists of various types of musical instruments, including traditional and modern instruments, used to create music that accompanies the actors' performances on stage. The cai luong orchestra may include instruments such as đàn tranh (zither), đàn nguyệt (moon lute), đàn tứ (four-stringed lute), đàn bầu (monochord), đàn nhị (two-stringed

fiddle), guitar, drums, brass instruments, and other instruments. Each type of musical instrument has its own role and function in creating music that suits the emotions, situations, and content of the cai luong performance in general and *hat chap cai luong arts* in particular. The cai luong orchestra is carefully selected and organized by the director and music producer to achieve the best musical effect for the performance. Cai luong music is an important part of the art form, contributing to its uniqueness, attractiveness, and memorability.

**Authentic materials:** The materials used in *hat chap cai luong arts* include not only the core repertoire of don ca tai tu (a genre of traditional music) but also various songs and plays from different periods. Therefore, these materials are considered a handbook for the ensemble members to confidently apply and innovate, flexibly building a performance that becomes better over time.

In terms of spiritual aspects, the *hat chap cai luong arts* have the following prominent elements:

**Emotions and Sentiments:** The *hat chap cai luong arts* are not only the artistic performance but also the means of conveying the emotions and sentiments of the actors and characters in the story. The melodies, lyrics, and authentic performances in *hat chap cai luong arts* evoke a range of emotions, from joy, sadness, and pain to hope and love. This helps to express and affirm the spirit and cultural nature of the people in the Southern region of Vietnam.

Considered as an "art of emotions" by experts, cai luong scripts in general, and *hat chap cai luong arts* in particular, often contain touching stories and sometimes reflect social realities. Cai luong works are typically based on fundamental emotions such as tragedy, comedy, heroism, and romance.

**Heroic and Tragic Elements:** Heroic or tragic emotions often appear in cai luong plays with revolutionary themes, rooted in tradition, which have been present in ancient tuồng plays since 1921. Over time, cai luong works on revolutionary and resistance topics, featuring heroic and tragic elements, have been strongly developed.

**Tragic Element:** Tragic emotions in cai luong do not imply a lack of resolution. Humans overcome difficulties, transcend their destinies, and surpass the challenges of life to pursue happiness. The characters on the cai luong stage often possess strong personalities, ready to confront hardships to achieve happiness. Especially, cai luong works often have happy endings, aiming for goodness, beauty, and triumph over evil.

**Humorous Element:** To evoke tragic emotions in cai luong, authors often focus on acting, plot, music, and lyrics. On the other hand, humorous emotions are emphasized through the performances of actors,



particularly through their appearance, rather than through the inner thoughts of the characters. The comedic roles serve to diminish the tragic nature of scenes or alleviate the tension in dramatic actions. This aspect is worth exploring to make *hat chap cai luong arts* more entertaining and lively, allowing the audience to watch comfortably without excessive tension.

**Romantic Element:** The romantic element of cai luong art is expressed through the content of the works, which often have elements of dramatic literature. Cai luong dramatic literature reflects social realities from ancient times to the contemporary period, and of course, it cannot be without stories of family, love, and friendship, which are used as the main ingredients. Therefore, the romantic essence of cai luong is often manifested through the plots of the works.

### 1.2.3. *Prominent Values of Hat chap cai luong Arts Value:*

The hat chap cai luong arts often portray stories about life, characters, and human values. By depicting everyday situations and challenges in life, *hat chap cai luong arts* encourage empathy, sympathy, and awareness of human values. This creates a spiritual connection between the actors and the audience and fosters solidarity within the community.

#### **Community Cohesion Value:**

Hat chap cai luong arts holds a value of community cohesion. It is not just a form of performing art for individuals or groups of artists but also an activity in which the whole community can participate and engage. Organizing performances, classes, and community involvement in the preservation and development of *hat chap cai luong arts* not only creates bonds among community members but also establishes a cultural and traditional platform for the community to collectively experience and express their cultural identity. The content of *hat chap cai luong arts* is derived from materials in life, history, and culture, making it a connecting element for tourism and destinations.

#### **Historical and Traditional Value:**

The hat chap cai luong arts carry historical and traditional significance. It has existed and evolved over centuries, becoming an integral part of Vietnamese traditional culture. *hat chap cai luong arts* is not only an artistic performance but also a means of transmitting and preserving the stories, traditions, and history of the Vietnamese people. Through cai luong plays, one can gain an understanding of life, society, and historical events that have occurred in the past. Combining tourism with *hat chap cai luong arts* provides tourists with the opportunity to directly access and experience these historical and

traditional values, thereby enriching and deepening their travel experiences.

## 2.2. The Importance of Hat chap cai luong Arts in Culture and Tourism

According to Huynh Khai, former Head of the Traditional Music Department at the Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music, in an interview on December 27, 2023 (recorded by the author),

*"We hope that **hat chap cai luong arts** can contribute to promoting tourism. For example, when I visited the historical site of Cao Van Lau, I found it to be a convenient place to perform. If we incorporate hat chap cai luong arts there and tell the story of Cao Van Lau in about 10 minutes, people will understand more about the origin and importance of this art form.*

*For My Tho town, a land of talented musicians and cultural figures such as composer Tran Huu Trang, artists Bay Nam, Kim Cuong, Minh Phung, and Professor Tran Van Khe, we can adapt classical tuong plays into short **hat chap cai luong arts** to introduce them in tourist areas.*

*Places like Thoi Son Island or Thay Nam Tu Theater could become attractive tourist destinations. However, when I visited Thoi Son Island recently, I only saw don ca tai tu performances, while we could further develop **hat chap cai luong arts** and introduce local historical figures. Once we successfully develop and implement these programs, Thoi Son Island could become a special place for preserving and promoting don ca tai tu and cai luong."*

According to Nguyen Le Tuyen (Lecturer at the Australian National University), on December 27, 2023, the content of the interview was recorded by the author:

*"I had the experience of traveling to the Mekong Delta and watching do ca tai tu performances organized by some travel companies. Even though I know Vietnamese, when watching those performances, I found them difficult to understand and access. This also means that foreign tourists on such trips, if the introduction to don ca tai tu is not appealing enough, may not want to come back.*

*In Western countries, when watching plays or operas, translation methods and subtitles are often used to help the audience understand the content. For example, if an opera is performed in Italian, most of the audience already knows the storyline and understands Italian texts. However, those who do not know Italian can rely on subtitles displayed on screens, synchronized with the stage situation. Simultaneous subtitles in English, combined with music and other elements, help the audience grasp the content immediately. Similarly, if we apply a similar approach to **hat chap cai luong arts**, we can create an equivalent experience to the opera performances conducted abroad."*

It can be said that the performance style of *hat chap cai luong arts* is a refinement, an improvement, and a more compact form. *Hat chap cai luong arts* play an important role in the tourism industry, providing visitors with a glimpse of Vietnam's rich cultural heritage. Performances can enhance the cultural experience for tourists and promote understanding of Vietnam's traditional art forms. The following advantages contribute to this:

**Concise Content:** *Hat chap cai luong arts* feature shorter plotlines compared to full-length cai luong plays, lasting only about 10–20 minutes. This makes it easier for tour guides to translate and explain to international tourists.

**Combining singing and acting:** *hat chap cai luong arts* combines both singing and acting elements. The performers not only sing but also take on roles and portray dramatic actions to convey the story.

**Musical scales and stylistic elements:** The musical foundation of *hat chap cai luong arts* draws inspiration from traditional musical scales and stylistic elements in *don ca tai tu* (a traditional chamber music genre of Southern Vietnam) as well as other musical forms such as *hò*, *ngâm*, *hát lý*, and *vọng cổ*.

**Organizational requirements:** *Hat chap cai luong arts* requires performers to have skills in both singing and acting. The performances also need appropriate stage props and setups to create a vibrant experience. The timing and venue for the performances need to be arranged accordingly.

**Prominent values:** *Hat chap cai luong arts* carry cultural and historical values, contributing to the preservation and promotion of traditional art forms. It possesses a special appeal when combining music, storytelling, and stage elements.

**Role of hat chap cai luong arts in developing unique tourism products:** The Southern region has a history of over 300 years of cultivation due to the significant contributions of pioneers from the Northern region and Central region people moving to the South around the 17th century. During that time, the creation of a cultural landscape was not only a material value but also a grand spiritual value. Among them, traditional art forms and folk music were generated to satisfy human needs, aspirations for love and peace, and dreams of prosperous humanity. Therefore, the *hat chap cai luong arts* have played and continue to play a valuable role in affirming the cultural identity of the region, especially the southern culture of Vietnam. It is an indispensable part of the list of traditional arts in the South.

The *hat chap cai luong arts* not only showcase the distinctive music and acting of the Southern region but also embody profound spiritual values such as love for the

hometown, love for fellow countrymen, gratitude, loyalty, and pride in the region's historical traditions and culture, which have spread to many other regions.

Transmitting and affirming these values through *hat chap cai luong arts* in tourism activities contributes to enhancing the image and understanding of Southern culture, creating a significant attraction for tourist destinations. The *hat chap cai luong arts* play an important role in affirming and preserving the cultural identity of the region and Southern culture, providing not only material but also spiritual value.

### III. ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF HAT CHAP CAI LUONG ARTS IN CREATING ATTRACTION FOR THE TOURIST DESTINATION OF THOI SON ISLAND, TIEN GIANG PROVINCE

#### 1. SWOT Analysis of *Hat chap cai luong arts* at the Destination

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis is a strategic analysis method to evaluate the internal and external factors of a tourism product. Here is an example of a SWOT analysis for the tourism product of the *hat chap cai luong arts*:

##### **Strengths:**

- ✚ Cai luong as an art form is a distinctive element of the national culture, attracting the interest of art-loving tourists who want to explore the local culture.
- ✚ It can create a unique and immersive experience with cai luong art, allowing tourists to participate in the performances.
- ✚ Cai luong can provide tourists with a rich historical and cultural experience.

##### **Weaknesses:**

- ✚ Language and cultural barriers may exist since cai luong is often performed in the local language and has deep cultural elements that may be difficult for foreign tourists to understand.
- ✚ There may be a lack of infrastructure and facilities to meet the needs of tourists, including theaters, hotels, and other supporting services.

##### **Opportunities:**

- ✚ The tourism product of *hat chap cai luong arts* can leverage the trend of enhancing cultural experiences and exploring local art.
- ✚ It is possible to develop tour packages that combine cai luong performances with visits to cultural heritage sites, local cuisine, or interactions with cai luong artists.

- ✚ The supportive policies and encouragement from the government in exploiting the value of traditional culture and art can be leveraged for economic development and cultural preservation.

### Threats:

- ✚ Competition from other tourism products that can provide similar cultural and artistic experiences.
- ✚ Changing preferences and demands of tourists may pose a threat, leading to a decrease in the demand for cai lung.

### 2. Realistic Evaluation through Surveys

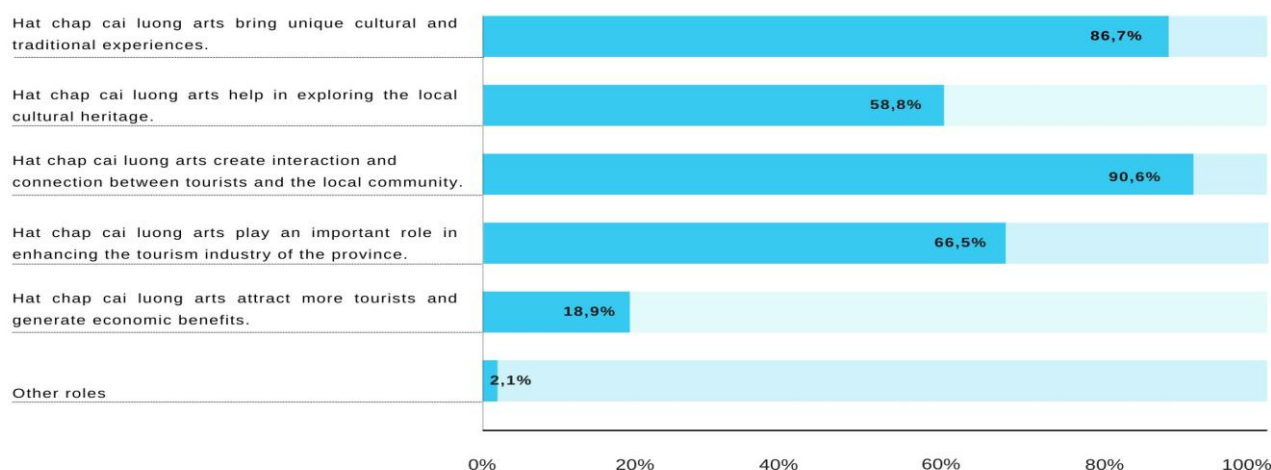
In the author's recent survey with 234 tourists, 150 were male, accounting for 64.1%, and 84 were female, accounting for 35.92% of the respondents. Regarding the occupation of the tourists, 43 individuals (18.4%) were civil servants and employees, 40 individuals (17.1%) were tourists, 52 individuals (22.2%) were tour guides, 21 individuals (9%) were from travel companies, 13 individuals (5.6%) were local residents, and the rest were from various occupations.

Regarding the role of *hat chap cai lung arts* in the development of cultural tourism, the majority of opinions stated that *hat chap cai lung arts* brings unique cultural and traditional experiences (86.70%); helps in exploring the local cultural heritage; creates interaction and connection between tourists and the community and the local area (58.80%); and plays an important role in enhancing the tourism industry of the province. A minority believed that *hat chap cai lung arts* attract more tourists and generate economic benefits. However, notably, *hat chap cai lung arts* create interaction and connection between tourists and the community and the local area (90.60%). Specifically, it accomplishes the following:

- ❖ Creates cultural interaction between tourists and the local community.
- ❖ Fosters a connection between tourists and the local community.
- ❖ Promotes and introduces the local cultural heritage.
- ❖ Enhances the position of the tourism industry in the province.

The role of hat chap cai lung arts in the development of cultural tourism	Count	Column N %
<i>Hat chap cai lung arts bring unique cultural and traditional experiences.</i>	202	86.7%
<i>Hat chap cai lung arts help in exploring the local cultural heritage.</i>	137	58.8%
<i>Hat chap cai lung arts</i> create interaction and connection between tourists and the local community.	211	90.6%
<i>Hat chap cai lung arts</i> play an important role in enhancing the tourism industry of the province.	155	66.5%
<i>Hat chap cai lung arts</i> attract more tourists and generate economic benefits.	44	18.9%
Other roles	5	2.1%

### The role of hat chap cai lung arts in the development of cultural tourism



### The role of hat chap cai lung arts in the development of cultural tourism

Source: Survey Results, 2023

Based on the survey and research results, the author found that *hat chap cai luong arts* contribute only 18.90% to attracting tourists and generating economic benefits. While this percentage may seem low, its role in creating interaction and connection between tourists and the local community, as well as its ability to provide unique cultural and traditional experiences, is significant. This is the key to driving sustainable development for cultural tourism on Thoi Son Island, Tien Giang Province.

The author also received feedback from tourists regarding the necessary steps to develop *hat chap cai luong arts* for tourism purposes. The responses were as follows:

- 72.6% of respondents believed that preserving and ensuring the continuity of this artistic practice in the long term is essential for integrating *hat chap cai luong arts* into serving tourists on Thoi Son Island.
- 67.5% of respondents emphasized the need for training and developing a skilled workforce with

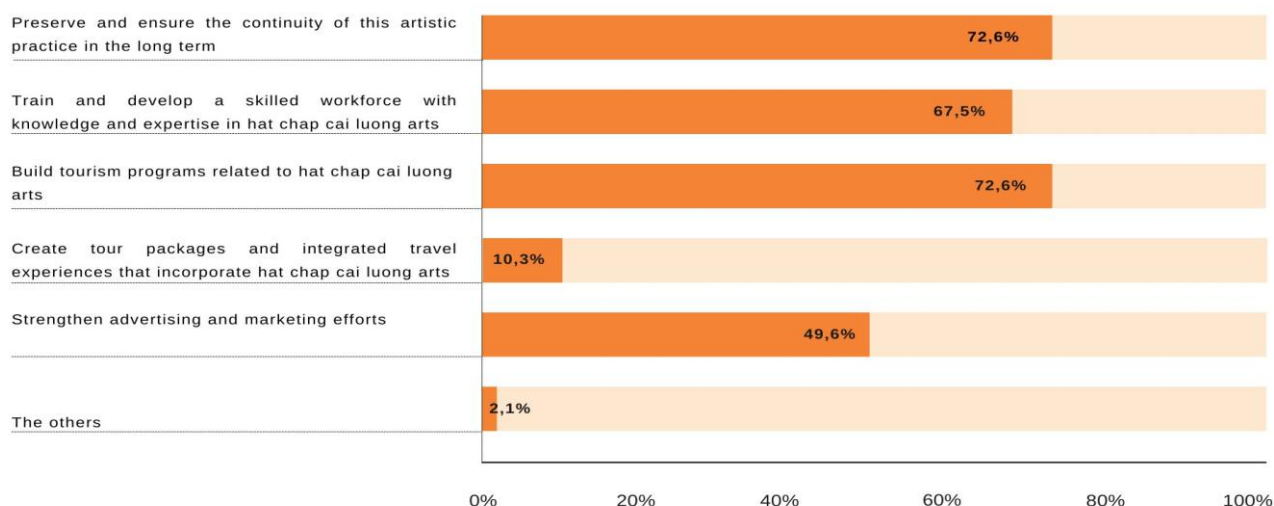
knowledge and expertise in *hat chap cai luong arts*.

- 72.6% of respondents suggested building tourism programs related to *hat chap cai luong arts*.
- 49.6% of respondents recommended creating tour programs and travel experiences that incorporate *hat chap cai luong arts*.
- 10.3% of respondents proposed the creation of tour packages and integrated travel experiences specifically focused on *hat chap cai luong arts*.
- The remaining respondents provided various other suggestions and conditions.

Overall, the feedback highlights the importance of preserving and promoting *hat chap cai luong arts*, investing in training and development, and integrating them into well-designed tourism programs and experiences to fully leverage their potential for cultural tourism on Thoi Son Island.

Necessary steps to develop hat chap cai luong arts for tourism purposes	Count	Column N %
<i>Preserve and ensure the continuity of this artistic practice in the long term</i>	170	72.6%
<i>Train and develop a skilled workforce with knowledge and expertise in hat chap cai luong arts</i>	158	67.5%
<i>Build tourism programs related to hat chap cai luong arts</i>	170	72.6%
<i>Create tour packages and integrated travel experiences that incorporate hat chap cai luong arts</i>	24	10.3%
<i>Strengthen advertising and marketing efforts</i>	116	49.6%
<i>The others</i>	5	2.1%

### Necessary steps to develop hat chap cai luong arts for tourism purposes



### Necessary steps to develop hat chap cai luong arts for tourism purposes

Source: Survey Results, 2023



Due to practical results, the author has identified some limitations, including investment capacity, community and artist participation, support from local authorities, and the ability to conserve and sustainably develop the tourism product. Therefore, the author would like to propose some specific solutions and directions.

#### IV. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HAT CHAP CAI LUONG ARTS TOURISM AT THOI SON ISLAND, TIEN GIANG PROVINCE

##### 4.1. Understand and exploit the local advantages

- To develop the tourism product of *hat chap cai luong arts* at Thoi Son Island, it is necessary to understand and exploit the local advantages, including culture, heritage, landscape, and artistic human resources of Cai luong.
- Grasp and honor the unique cultural values, such as traditional Cai luong performances, local stories, and images, to create experiences and attract tourists.

##### 4.2. Build and improve suitable infrastructure

- Improve tourism infrastructure, including transportation, destinations, restaurants, hotels, and other facilities, to meet the needs of tourists.
- In particular, ensure facilities and services that meet the requirements of visitors participating in Cai luong-related activities, such as theaters, performance centers, and exhibition areas.

##### 4.3. Diversify Cai luong tourism products and experiences

- Offer diverse tour packages, including activities such as watching traditional Cai luong performances, participating in performances at theaters and cultural centers, and experiencing working with Cai luong artists.
- Additionally, combine tourism with other activities such as visiting local landmarks, traditional craft villages, experiencing local cuisine specialties, and participating in classes and workshops on Cai luong to provide multidimensional experiences for tourists.

##### 4.4. Establish partnerships and promote Cai luong tourism products

- ✚ Establish partnerships with entities including Cai luong producers, artists, cultural councils, and tourism businesses to enhance support for Cai

luong tourism products, creating a strong collaborative network.

- ✚ Implement promotional campaigns and marketing for Cai luong tourism products through various media channels, cultural events, websites, and social networks to attract tourist attention and strengthen brand identity.

##### 4.5. Preserve and promote the cultural heritage of *hat chap cai luong arts*

- Ensure the preservation and protection of the cultural heritage values of *hat chap cai luong arts* through support and training for young Cai luong artists, while providing opportunities for them to perform and pass on this artistic tradition.
- Build reliable centers, theaters, or performance spaces to maintain and promote the cultural heritage of *hat chap cai luong arts*. Additionally, organize activities such as workshops, exhibitions, and competitions to enhance awareness and exploration of Cai luong.

##### 4.6. Foster positive interaction with the local community

- Build and maintain a positive and sustainable interaction with the local community, such as engaging in farming activities, visiting craft villages, and conversing with local residents.
- Create opportunities for collaboration and exchange with the community, recruit local human resources for tourism activities, purchase local products and services, and support community projects.
- Ensure active participation and positive responses from the local community in the development and management of Cai luong tourism products.

##### 4.7. Protect the environment

- ❖ Implement environmental protection measures in the development and operation of Cai luong tourism products, manage waste, use energy-efficient resources, and encourage tourists to engage in sustainable tourism activities.

##### 4.8. Education and Awareness

- ❖ Enhance education and raise awareness about the value of sustainable *hat chap cai luong arts* tourism for tourists and the local community. This can be achieved through communication campaigns, tour guides, and incorporating educational programs in schools.

## V. CONCLUSION

The combination of cultural, historical, communication, and promotional elements is the key to creating a unique and appealing tourism experience. Tourists will not only enjoy high-quality performances but also have the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the local culture and traditions.

To continue developing the distinctive *hat chap cai luong arts* tourism product, collaboration is needed from researchers, tourism managers, artists, and the local community. Researching and implementing modern marketing and promotional methods will help bring the product closer to potential customers. Additionally, investment in training and developing human resources related to *hat chap cai luong arts*, from artists to tourism service personnel, is essential to improving the quality and professionalism of the tourism industry.

Furthermore, the preservation and promotion of the cultural value of the *hat chap cai luong arts* also require attention and support from relevant authorities and social organizations. Specific policies are needed to protect and develop this art form, including safeguarding historical sites and documentation as well as creating favorable conditions for performance activities and cultural education.

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Mr. Ho Nhut Quang's (a male actor dressed in a blue ao dai) documentary images, during his time as a tour guide, performing a traditional cai luong play to serve Japanese tourists at Thoi Son Island, were captured and broadcasted by Sendai Television on August 10<sup>th</sup> 2010, to introduce Vietnam and promote the captivating Mekong Delta tour to the Japanese public.

(Source: Sendai Television -Japan).